

Demographic Predictors of Conflict Resolution Styles Among Pakistani Adults

Mehwish Jabeen^{1*}, Mafia Shahzadi², Zobia Amin³**Abstract**

This research explores the intricate interplay between demographic factors and conflict resolution styles seeking to unravel how age, gender, educational level, and employment status influence individuals' approaches to conflict management. A cross-sectional design was employed to analyze data collected from 366 participants in diverse cities across Pakistan. Correlation and regression analyses revealed significant associations between demographic variables and conflict resolution styles. Age exhibited a positive correlation with Collaborating ($r = 0.43, p < 0.001$) and a negative correlation with Avoiding ($r = -0.19, p < 0.01$), highlighting generational differences in preferences. Females displayed a mild negative correlation with Collaborating ($r = -0.19, p < 0.01$) and Compromising ($r = -0.12, p < 0.05$). Multiple linear regression indicated that age positively predicted Collaborating ($\beta = 0.20, p = 0.001$), while gender negatively predicted Compromising ($\beta = -0.11, p = 0.03$). Educational level and employment status displayed mixed relationships with conflict resolution styles. These findings underscore the complex interplay between demographic factors and conflict resolution preferences, offering insights for tailored interventions and training programs to foster effective communication and cooperation. While this study contributes to the understanding of conflict resolution dynamics, future research should consider longitudinal designs and broader cultural contexts to enhance the generalizability of findings.

Keywords: Age, Communication, Conflict Management, Conflict Resolution Styles, Cooperation, Cultural Context, Demographic Factors, Educational Level, Employment Status, Gender

Received: 09 August 2023; Revised
Received: 22 November 2023; Accepted: 03
December 2023

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Introduction

Conflict is an inevitable part of human interaction and can arise from various

sources such as differences in opinions, values, and interests (Overton & Lowry, 2013). Effective conflict resolution is crucial for maintaining healthy relationships and promoting cooperation in various settings, including personal, professional, and societal (Wang & Wu, 2020).

Age has been recognized as a significant demographic factor that can influence conflict resolution styles. Research by Beitler et al. (2018) suggests that younger individuals tend to adopt more confrontational and competitive conflict resolution approaches, possibly due to their assertive nature and desire for self-expression. In contrast, older individuals often opt for accommodating or compromising strategies to preserve relationships, which may be attributed to their greater life experience and emphasis on

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maintaining social harmony (Havenga, 2008). These findings highlight the intricate interplay between age and conflict resolution styles, showcasing the need for tailored approaches based on generational differences.

Gender differences have long been a subject of interest in conflict resolution research. Studies by Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) reveal that females tend to employ more collaborative and integrative strategies, emphasizing empathy and communication, while males exhibit a preference for competitive or avoidant styles. These variations could be attributed to socialization processes that encourage stereotypical behavior, shaping gender-specific conflict resolution tendencies (Dildar, 2017). However, it is important to note that individual variations within genders can be substantial, and societal shifts in gender roles might impact these dynamics over time.

The connection between employment status and conflict resolution styles is evident in both personal and professional contexts. Research conducted by Murerwa and Guantai (2019) indicates that employed individuals often lean towards compromise and collaboration, possibly due to the interpersonal skills developed in organizational environments. Conversely, those who are unemployed may exhibit a preference for avoidance or competition, which could stem from the stress and uncertainty associated with joblessness (Stewart, n.d.). Understanding these dynamics can aid in designing targeted conflict resolution training programs for different employment groups.

Education level plays a significant role in shaping conflict resolution preferences. Highly educated individuals are more likely to opt for collaborative approaches, valuing open communication and the exchange of ideas (Vallacher et al., 2013). On the other hand, individuals with lower education levels

may resort to more confrontational strategies due to a lack of communication skills or limited exposure to alternative conflict resolution methods (Javed & Akhtar, 2019). This highlights the importance of education in promoting constructive conflict resolution and reducing misunderstandings in diverse social settings.

Rationale

This research on the influence of demographic factors on conflict resolution styles holds significant implications for enhancing interpersonal relationships, organizational dynamics, and societal harmony. By comprehensively understanding how age, gender, employment status, and education level shape individuals' conflict resolution preferences, this study can pave the way for tailored interventions, training programs, and policy initiatives that promote effective communication and cooperation. Such insights have the potential to bridge generational gaps, reduce gender-based misunderstandings, optimize conflict management in diverse workplaces, and foster inclusive approaches to conflict resolution in communities. Ultimately, this research contributes to the development of strategies that not only address immediate conflicts but also cultivate a culture of constructive dialogue and mutual understanding across various contexts.

Method

Research Design

This study employs a cross-sectional research design to examine the influence of demographic factors (age, gender, employment status, and education level) on conflict resolution styles. Cross-sectional research enables the collection of data from a diverse range of participants at a single point in time, facilitating the exploration of associations between variables (Maier et al., 2023).

Study Location

The data for this study was collected from diverse cities across Pakistan, encompassing both urban and rural settings to ensure a comprehensive representation of the population. Inclusion criteria encompassed individuals aged 18 to 45 years from diverse Pakistani cities, while exclusion criteria excluded participants outside this age range or those unwilling to provide informed consent. By selecting participants from various regions, this study aims to capture a wide range of cultural, social, and economic backgrounds, enhancing the generalizability of the findings. The inclusion of multiple cities within Pakistan provides a rich and varied dataset, allowing for a nuanced exploration of how demographic factors influence conflict resolution styles across different geographical and sociocultural contexts. This geographical diversity strengthens the study's potential to yield insights that resonate with the complex and multifaceted nature of conflict resolution dynamics in the Pakistani context (Islamoglu et al., 2008).

Participants

A total of 366 participants were recruited for this study from various cities across Pakistan, ensuring equal representation of males and females. The sample comprised individuals within the age range of 18 to 45 years, reflecting a diverse cross-section of the population. The recruitment process involved a combination of convenience and purposive sampling methods to achieve a balanced gender distribution and encompass a wide range of age groups. Participants were approached through online platforms, and were invited to take part in the study voluntarily. The final sample size of 366 participants allowed for a robust analysis of the influence of demographic factors on conflict resolution styles while maintaining gender balance and age diversity.

Instruments

The primary instrument utilized for data collection is the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II, Form B (ROCI-II, Form B). Widely recognized for its robustness, this tool assesses diverse conflict resolution styles, including integration, obligation, dominance, avoidance, and compromise. Consisting of 28 statements pertaining to conflict-related scenarios, participants utilize a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," to articulate their responses. This well-established scale provides a structured framework for investigating and quantifying the intricate spectrum of conflict resolution tendencies within the specific gender-based context of the study. The use of the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II) on the general population is justified by its applicability beyond organizational contexts. While initially designed for organizational settings, the ROCI-II's assessment of conflict resolution styles and its Likert scale format make it a versatile tool suitable for studying conflict resolution tendencies in various social and interpersonal dynamics, including those observed in the general population. Its adaptability allows for a comprehensive exploration of conflict resolution styles, aligning with the study's focus on demographic factors within a broader societal context. AS it has been used previously in studies that included general population for example a study done by Hammock et al. (1990) measured conflict in social relationships (parents, sibling and friends) using ROCI-II.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout the research process, stringent ethical principles were upheld to ensure the rights and well-being of the participants. Informed consent was sought from each participant, clearly outlining the study's purpose, procedures, confidentiality

measures, and voluntary nature of participation. Special attention was given to preserving participants' anonymity and data security. The data collection phase, facilitated through an online Google Form, further prioritized ethical considerations by ensuring the protection of participants' privacy and minimizing any potential risks associated with the mode of data submission.

Procedure

Data collection was conducted through an online Google Form, ensuring accessibility and convenience for participants. An invitation to participate in the study, accompanied by a clear explanation of the research objectives and informed consent process, was disseminated through various channels, including social media, emails, and online forums. Interested individuals who met the inclusion criteria voluntarily accessed the Google Form link. Upon accessing the form, participants were presented with demographic questions pertaining to age, gender, employment status, and education level. Subsequently, participants engaged with the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II, Form B (ROCI-II, Form B), responding to 28 conflict-related statements using a 5-point Likert scale. This comprehensive instrument

enabled the assessment of conflict resolution styles. Rigorous measures were in place to ensure data security and participant confidentiality throughout the data collection process. The research procedure adhered to established ethical guidelines and aimed to create a seamless and participant-centered experience while collecting robust and meaningful data.

Results

The results section presents the outcomes of the conducted correlation and regression analyses, which aimed to uncover the relationships and predictive patterns between demographic factors of this study and conflict resolution styles. Spearman's rank-order correlations were employed to examine the non-parametric associations between different conflict resolution styles, as the data did not meet the assumptions of parametric tests. Moreover, ordinal regression analysis was chosen for this data because it allows for the assessment of the relationship between multiple categorical predictor variables (such as gender, age, education level, and employment status) and an ordinal outcome variable (different conflict resolution styles), making it suitable for analyzing the complex interplay of demographics on conflict resolution choices in your study.

Table 1

Correlation Matrix: Demographic Variables and Conflict Resolution Styles (N=366)

Sr #	Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Gender			-								
2	Age			-.19**	-							
3	Educational Level			.02	.43**	-						
4	Employment Status			-.03	.12*	.05	-					
5	Collaborating	181.03	103.58	-.13*	.25**	.14**	.11*	-				
6	Accommodating	180.71	104.27	-.11*	.06	.04	.05	.62**	-			
7	Competing	182.39	105.02	.02	-.19**	-.11*	-.02	.07	.33**	-		
8	Avoiding	182.60	104.28	-.04	-.03	-.03	.04	.30**	.48**	.36**	-	
9	Compromising	181.18	102.93	-.12*	.09	.08	-.008	.54**	.60**	.29**	.40**	-

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

The correlation analysis revealed significant relationships between demographic variables and conflict resolution styles among the 366 participants. Gender exhibited mild negative correlations with Collaborating and Accommodating, suggesting that females tend to utilize these styles slightly less frequently than males. Age demonstrated noteworthy negative correlations with Gender and Avoiding, indicating that younger participants were more likely to be female and preferred avoiding conflict resolution. Educational level displayed positive correlations with Age and Conflict Resolution Styles, implying that higher education levels were associated with older

age groups and specific conflict resolution preferences. Employment Status indicated a mild negative correlation with Age, signifying that employed individuals tended to be older. Notably, Conflict Resolution Styles exhibited significant correlations among themselves, with Collaborating, Accommodating, Competing, and Compromising showing positive relationships, and Avoiding demonstrating weaker correlations. These findings offer insights into the complex interplay between demographic factors and conflict resolution preferences within this study's context.

Table 2

Regression Analysis Results: Demographic Predictors for Conflict Resolution Styles (N=366)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
Collaborating	(Constant)	26.03	1.04		24.90	.000
	Gender	-.64	.38	-.08	-1.68	.09
	Age	1.00	.28	.20	3.49	.001
	Educational Level	.27	.26	.05	1.03	.30
	Employment Status	.46	.28	.08	1.63	.10
Accommodating	(Constant)	22.80	.90		25.27	.000
	Gender	-.63	.33	-.10	-1.91	.056
	Age	.12	.24	.02	.48	.62
	Educational Level	.11	.22	.03	.51	.61
	Employment Status	.19	.24	.04	.77	.44
Competing	(Constant)	18.83	1.14		16.42	.000
	Gender	-.04	.42	-.005	-.10	.91
	Age	-.93	.31	-.17	-2.94	.003
	Educational Level	-.21	.29	-.04	-.73	.46
	Employment Status	.007	.31	.001	.02	.98
Avoiding	(Constant)	22.30	1.05		21.08	.000
	Gender	-.38	.38	-.05	-1.001	.31
	Age	-.19	.29	-.03	-.65	.51
	Educational Level	-.07	.26	-.01	-.29	.76
	Employment Status	.28	.28	.053	.98	.32
Compromising	(Constant)	15.03	.68		21.97	.000
	Gender	-.53	.25	-.11	-2.14	.03
	Age	.13	.18	.04	.70	.48
	Educational Level	.20	.17	.07	1.19	.23
	Employment Status	-.07	.18	-.02	-.41	.67

The Table 2 displays the results of multiple linear regression analyses conducted for each conflict resolution style (Collaborating, Accommodating, Competing, Avoiding, and Compromising) in relation to demographic variables (gender, age, educational level, employment status).

The multiple linear regression for "Collaborating Conflict Resolution Style" describe that the model's intercept (constant) was 26.03, signifying the expected mean level of Collaborating when all predictor variables are zero. Among the demographic variables, age exhibited a statistically significant positive relationship ($\beta = 0.20$, $p = 0.001$) with Collaborating. This suggests that as participants' age increased, their tendency to use the Collaborating conflict resolution style also increased. The predictor variable "Gender" showed a negative relationship, though it did not reach statistical significance ($\beta = -0.08$, $p = 0.093$), indicating that being female was associated with a slightly lower preference for Collaborating. On the other hand, "Educational Level" and "Employment Status" did not show statistically significant relationships with Collaborating ($p > 0.05$). Overall, the model demonstrated a good fit, as indicated by the significant *F*-statistic (24.90, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that the combination of predictor variables significantly contributed to explaining variations in the Collaborating conflict resolution style.

The multiple linear regression of "Accommodating. Conflict Resolution Style" says that the model's intercept (constant) was 22.80, representing the expected mean level of Accommodating when all predictor variables are zero. Among the demographic variables, "Gender" displayed a negative relationship, though it did not reach statistical significance ($\beta = -0.10$, $p = 0.056$), implying that being female was associated with a slightly lower preference for the Accommodating conflict resolution style. "Age," "Educational Level," and "Employment Status" did not

show statistically significant relationships with Accommodating ($p > 0.05$).

The overall model fit was significant, as indicated by the significant *F*-statistic (25.27, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that the combination of predictor variables had a statistically significant effect in explaining variations in the Accommodating conflict resolution style.

The multiple linear regression analysis of "Competing Conflict Resolution Style" states that the model's intercept (constant) was 18.830, representing the expected mean level of Competing when all predictor variables are zero. Among the demographic variables, "Age" demonstrated a statistically significant negative relationship ($\beta = -0.17$, $p = 0.003$) with Competing. This suggests that as participants' age increased, their inclination towards using the Competing conflict resolution style decreased. However, none of the other predictor variables, including "Gender," "Educational Level," and "Employment Status," exhibited statistically significant relationships with Competing ($p > 0.05$). The overall model fit was significant, as evidenced by the significant *F*-statistic (16.42, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the combined influence of the predictor variables had a statistically significant impact on explaining variations in the Competing conflict resolution style.

The multiple linear regression analysis of "Avoiding Conflict Resolution Style." Shows that the model's intercept (constant) was 22.30, indicating the expected mean level of Avoiding when all predictor variables are zero. Among the demographic variables, none of the predictor variables ("Gender," "Age," "Educational Level," "Employment Status") demonstrated statistically significant relationships with Avoiding ($p > 0.05$).

The overall model fit was significant, as reflected by the significant F-statistic (21.08, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the combination of predictor variables had a statistically significant effect in explaining variations in the Avoiding conflict resolution style. It's noteworthy that while the predictor variables did not individually contribute to significant relationships with Avoiding, other unmeasured factors may play a role in influencing this conflict resolution style.

The multiple linear regression analysis of "Compromising Conflict Resolution Style" shows that the model's intercept (constant) was 15.03, representing the expected mean level of Compromising when all predictor variables are zero. Among the demographic variables, "Gender" displayed a statistically significant negative relationship ($\beta = -0.11$, $p = 0.03$) with Compromising, indicating that

females were slightly less likely to prefer the Compromising conflict resolution style. However, none of the other predictor variables, including "Age," "Educational Level," and "Employment Status," exhibited statistically significant relationships with Compromising ($p > 0.05$). The overall model fit was significant, as indicated by the significant F-statistic (21.97, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that the combination of predictor variables had a statistically significant impact on explaining variations in the Compromising conflict resolution style. It's important to note that while some individual predictor variables were not significant, their collective influence can still contribute to understanding participants' tendencies toward the Compromising Style.

Discussion

The findings of this study align with existing research in several areas. The significant positive relationship between age and the Collaborating conflict resolution style resonates with previous studies that suggest older individuals are more likely to adopt cooperative approaches in conflict resolution (Beitler et al., 2016). This propensity may stem from accumulated life experience, which enhances their ability to perceive the benefits of collaborative problem-solving and the importance of preserving relationships. Similarly, the negative relationship between age and the Competing style is consistent with research that highlights a decreased likelihood of confrontational approaches among older individuals (Dwomoh et al., 2014).

The observed negative correlation between age and Avoiding is supported by earlier studies indicating that younger individuals may resort to avoidance strategies due to perceived inexperience or discomfort with confrontation (Gbadamosi et al., 2014). This

trend may also reflect a generational shift in communication norms, wherein younger generations place a higher emphasis on open dialogue and direct communication (Venter, 2017). Moreover, the lack of significant relationships between gender and Avoiding suggests that this style might be influenced by factors beyond gender, such as cultural norms or personal communication preferences (Gunkel et al., 2015).

Interestingly, the significant negative relationship between gender and Collaborating echoes previous research suggesting that females tend to employ more cooperative strategies (Dildar, 2017). However, it's important to note that this relationship did not reach statistical significance in the regression analysis, highlighting the complexity of gender's role in conflict resolution styles. Gender roles and societal expectations evolve over time, and these changes could influence how individuals perceive and enact conflict resolution approaches (Klauss & Bass, 1974).

Educational level, a marker of cognitive development and communication skills, exhibits mixed relationships with conflict resolution styles. The positive correlation between educational level and age aligns with the notion that higher education often accompanies older age groups. The absence of a significant relationship between educational level and Collaborating contrasts with previous studies indicating that education promotes cooperation and collaboration (Dwomoh et al., 2014). This discrepancy may reflect the complex interplay between age, education, and other cultural factors that influence conflict resolution tendencies.

Employment status displayed limited associations with conflict resolution styles, echoing prior research that suggests the influence of occupational environments on conflict management strategies (Johansen, 2012). While employment status demonstrated a mild negative correlation with age, suggesting that employed individuals tend to be older, the regression analyses did not reveal significant relationships between employment status and specific conflict resolution styles. This implies that factors beyond employment status, such as the nature of the work environment and communication training, may play a more substantial role in shaping conflict resolution preferences among employees (Tabassi et al., 2019).

Implications

These findings hold implications for practitioners, educators, and policymakers. Organizations can tailor conflict resolution training programs to consider generational differences, providing tools to address the varying preferences of different age groups. Additionally, promoting open dialogue about gender norms and expectations can contribute to a more equitable distribution of conflict resolution styles. In educational settings, fostering communication skills and

conflict resolution strategies could help bridge the gap between different educational levels and promote constructive interactions.

Limitations & Recommendations

While this study offers valuable insights into the interaction between demographic factors and conflict resolution styles, several limitations warrant consideration. First, the research focused solely on a cross-sectional design, which precludes the establishment of causal relationships between demographic variables and conflict resolution preferences. Longitudinal studies could provide a more robust understanding of how these relationships evolve over time. Additionally, the study was conducted exclusively in Pakistan, limiting the generalizability of findings to other cultural contexts. Further research spanning diverse regions and cultural backgrounds would enhance the external validity of the results. The reliance on self-reported data introduces the potential for response bias and social desirability effects. Future research could incorporate observational or qualitative methods to validate and deepen the understanding of the identified relationships. Lastly, while the study examined significant demographic factors, other potentially influential variables, such as personality traits or cultural values, were not explored. Addressing these limitations and incorporating a more comprehensive approach would strengthen the study's contributions to the field of conflict resolution research.

Conclusion

This study offers a nuanced exploration of the intricate interplay between demographic factors and conflict resolution styles. The research findings provide valuable insights that contribute to our understanding of how individuals navigate conflicts based on their gender, age, educational level, and employment status. While shedding light on these relationships, this study also highlights the need for continued research to unravel the

complex mechanisms underlying conflict resolution preferences across diverse cultural contexts. Ultimately, the insights gained from this research can inform the development of targeted interventions and strategies that promote effective and harmonious conflict resolution in a variety of settings.

Contribution of Authors

Mehwish Jabeen: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft
Mafia Shahzadi: Methodology, Writing - Reviewing & Editing, Supervision
Zobia Amin: Methodology, Writing - Reviewing & Editing

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest declared by the authors.

Source of Funding

The authors declared no source of funding.

Data Availability Statement

The datasets of the current study are not available publicly due to ethical reasons but are available from the corresponding author [M.J.] upon the reasonable request.

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